

Taking the plunge



From left, Edie Allens, Korey Bean and Chad Hodge jump into the water of Lake Keowee last week for Bean's annual birthday polar plunge. This year, Bean decided to turn the event into a fundraiser for A Home for Me. PHOTOS BY SAVANNAH BLAKE | THE JOURNAL

Local man turns annual birthday event into fundraiser

BY CAITLIN HERRINGTON
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — For at least a decade now, 31-year-old Korey Bean has celebrated his Jan. 9 birthday with a polar plunge into what should be chilly waters.

That wasn't quite the case last week when he and three friends

jumped into Lake Keowee for what he decided should be a charity fundraiser rather than act of, well, dumb tradition.

"One of my friends told me, 'Only you could turn something so stupid and irrational

into a good thing,'" he laughed. "It's just cool to do something I've always done and use it to help people."

So far, he's raised more than \$600 for A Home for Me, an Up-



Korey Bean cheers as he pops out of the water of Lake Keowee last week. Bean has raised more than \$600 for an Upstate charity and hopes to reach his \$1,000 goal before the donation window closes on Tuesday.

state-based fostering and adoption support network. He hopes to reach his \$1,000 goal before the donation window closes on Tuesday.

"The biggest thing is, it's a turning point and starting point for the annual 'Freezing Fun for Families Polar Plunge' that I'll put on every year," he said. "I want this thing to get big

and get the community involved."

Bean first heard of A Home for Me during the holidays when his employer, WaterSports Central in Seneca, sponsored several children for Christmas.

"They mainly deal with kids who

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are getting taken in by families, not as much fostering, but family members who take kids who don't have anywhere else to go," he said. "They support families who take in a kid they're not necessarily ready for, and a huge financial burden comes with that as well. There's a repetitive cycle you see a lot in families, and their main objective is to break that cycle."

Helping families in need stayed on his mind after the WaterSports initiative, and he turned his annual polar plunge into a fundraiser on Nov. 21 with a Facebook page to recruit friends, family and other businesses to donate — or brave the waters with him.

It wasn't really brave last week, with temperatures near 60 degrees, he said, though he's done the jump in much worse weather.

"The water was 59 degrees. The air was 59 degrees, it was

actually really good. Low 50s is about as cold as Keowee gets this time of year,"

Bean said. "One of my birthdays it was snowing and it was 25 degrees. That one, the water wasn't bad, but getting out was the worst part."

He's already thinking to next year and how to grow the event and find another local nonprofit to support.

"I'm horrible at putting this kind of stuff together on my end, but when I say I want to turn it into a big event, I'd like to see it be an all-day thing or even a full weekend, because there's not much going on this time of year," he said. "Maybe softball

tournaments and 5Ks and everything, and at the end, everybody jumps in. If I can get 25-30 to jump next year, that's awesome."

Despite the last-minute nature and lack of advertising on his end, he's calling the inaugural event a success and looks forward to a bigger splash at Freezing Fun for Families Polar Plunge next year — even if his friends think it's still a dumb idea.

"People think I'm crazy for doing it," he joked, "but now I'm crazy for a good cause, and that's something they can get behind."

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